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(54) **OPTICAL TOUCH SYSTEM COMPRISING MEANS FOR PROJECTING AND DETECTING LIGHT BEAMS ABOVE AND INSIDE A TRANSMISSIVE PANEL**

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
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(71) Applicant: **FlatFrog Laboratories AB**, Lund (SE)

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(72) Inventors: **Ola Wassvik**, Ryssby (SE); **Håkan Bergström**, Torna-hällestad (SE); **Ivan Karlsson**, Lund (SE); **Thomas Craven-Bartle**, Södra Sandby (SE)

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(73) Assignee: **FlatFrog Laboratories AB**, Lund (SE)

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(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Knobbe Martens Olson & Bear, LLP

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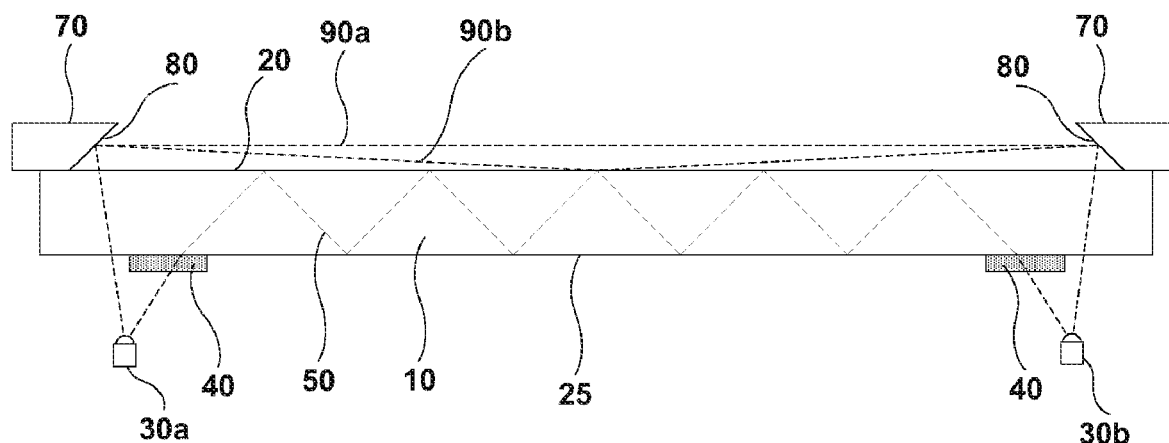
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

An embodiment of the invention provides a touch sensing apparatus, comprising: a light transmissive element (10) that defines a touch surface; a set of emitters (30a) arranged around the periphery of the touch surface to emit beams of light into the light transmissive element, wherein a first portion of the beams (50) of light propagate inside the light transmissive element while illuminating the touch surface such that an object touching the touch surface causes an attenuation of the propagating light, and wherein a second portion of the beams (90) of light pass out of the light transmissive element and are reflected to travel above the touch surface, a set of light detectors (30b) arranged around the periphery of the touch surface to receive light from the set of emitters from the transmissive element and from

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above the touch surface, wherein each light detector is arranged to receive light from more than one emitter.

19 Claims, 7 Drawing Sheets

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(58) Field of Classification Search

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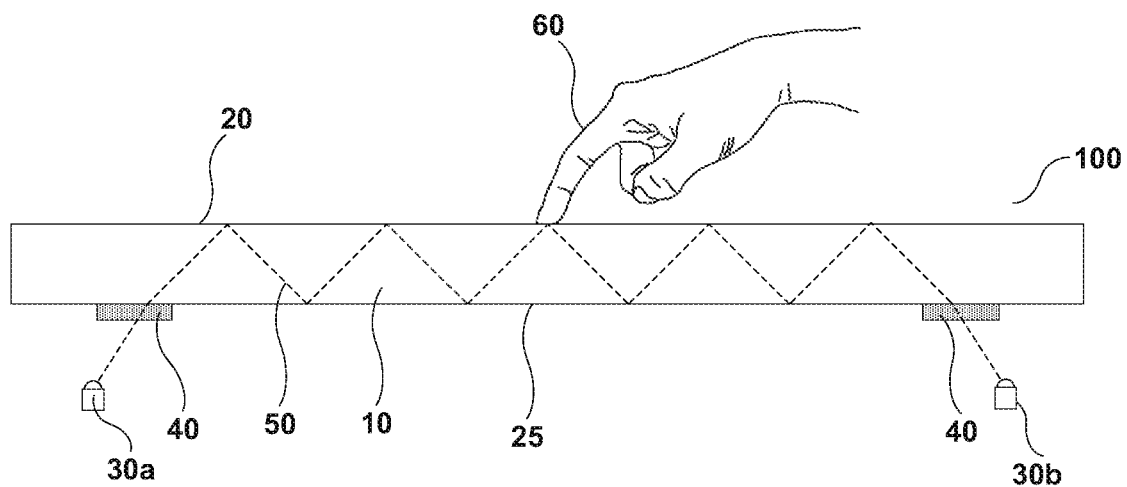


Figure 1

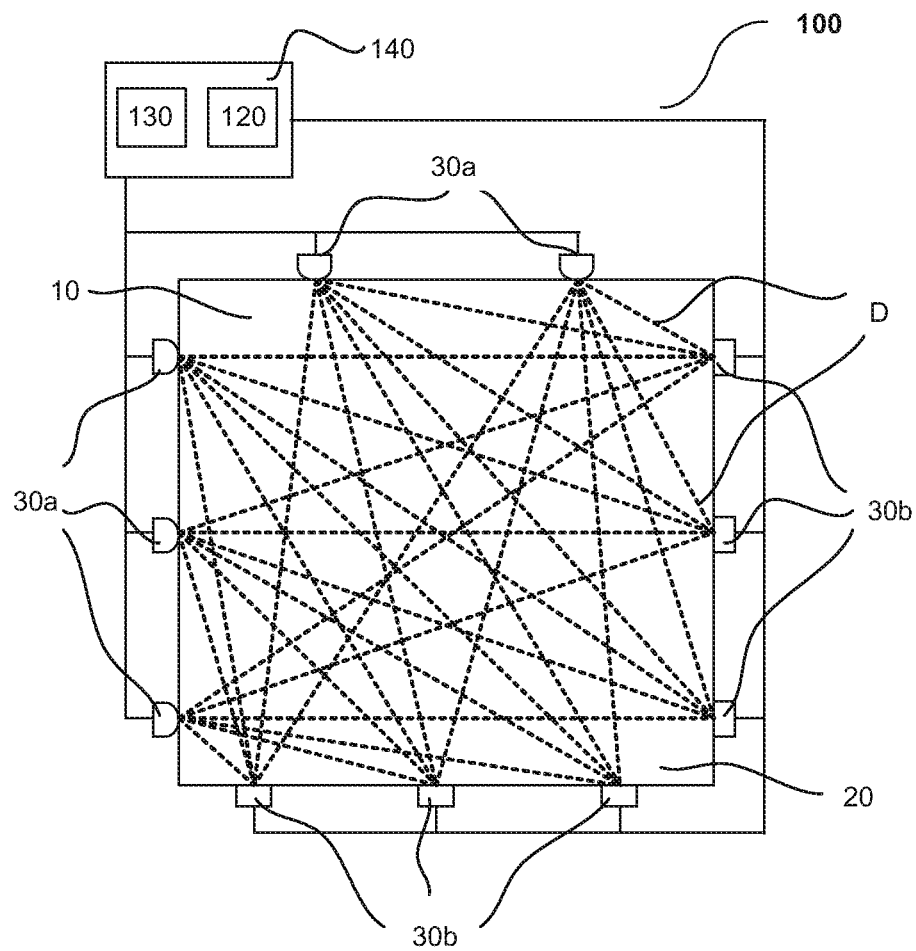


Figure 2

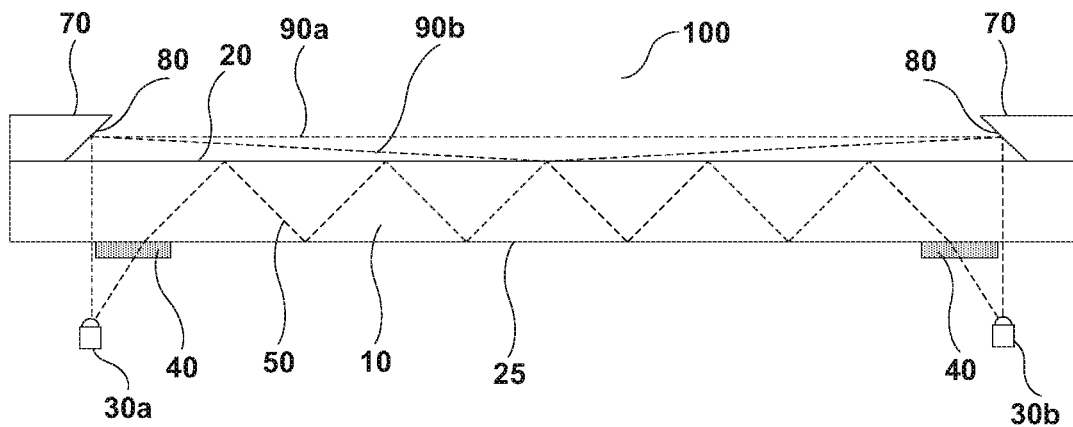


Figure 3

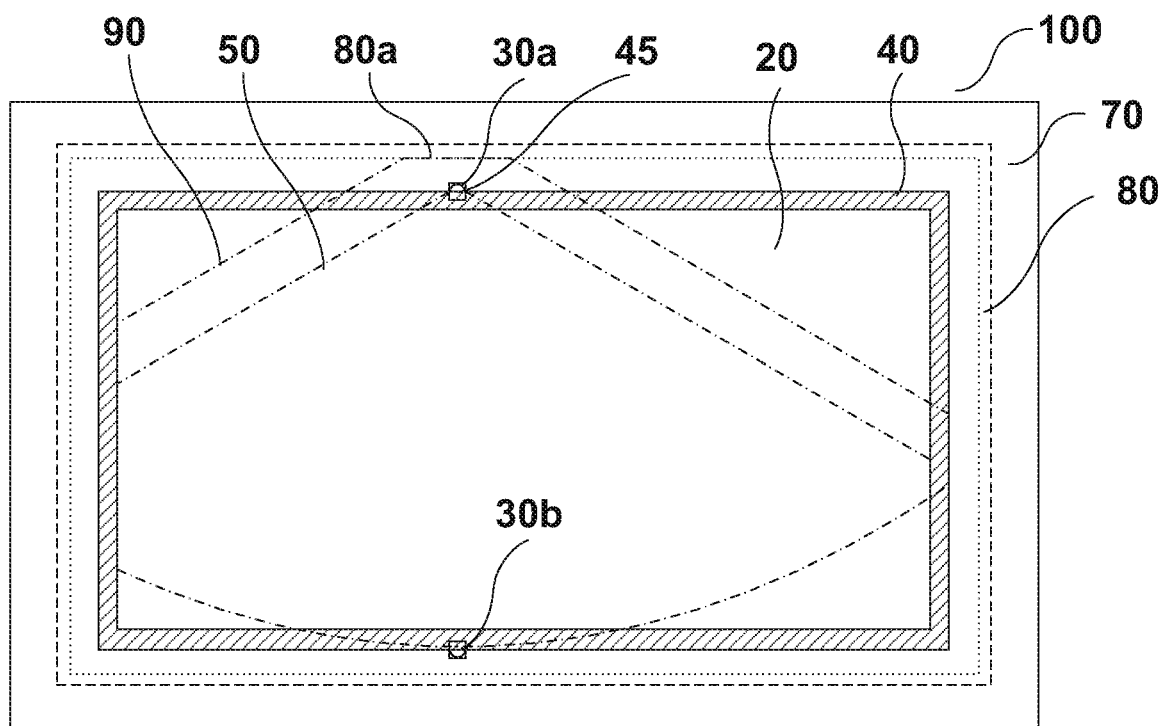


Figure 4

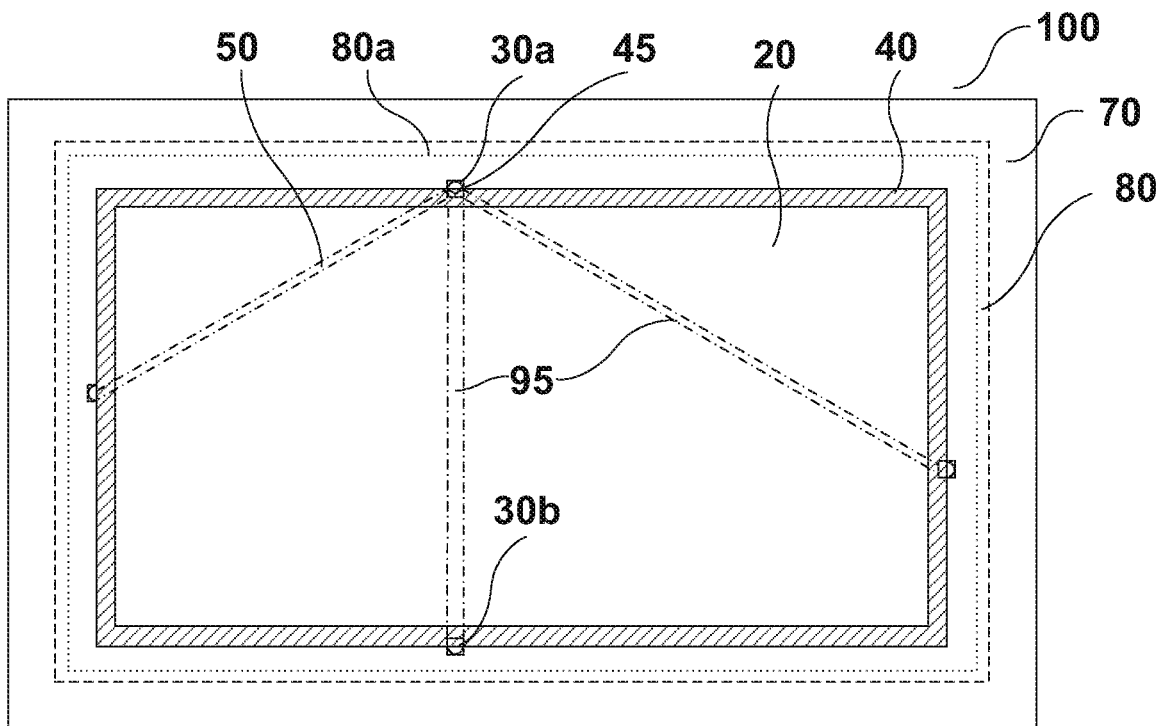


Figure 5

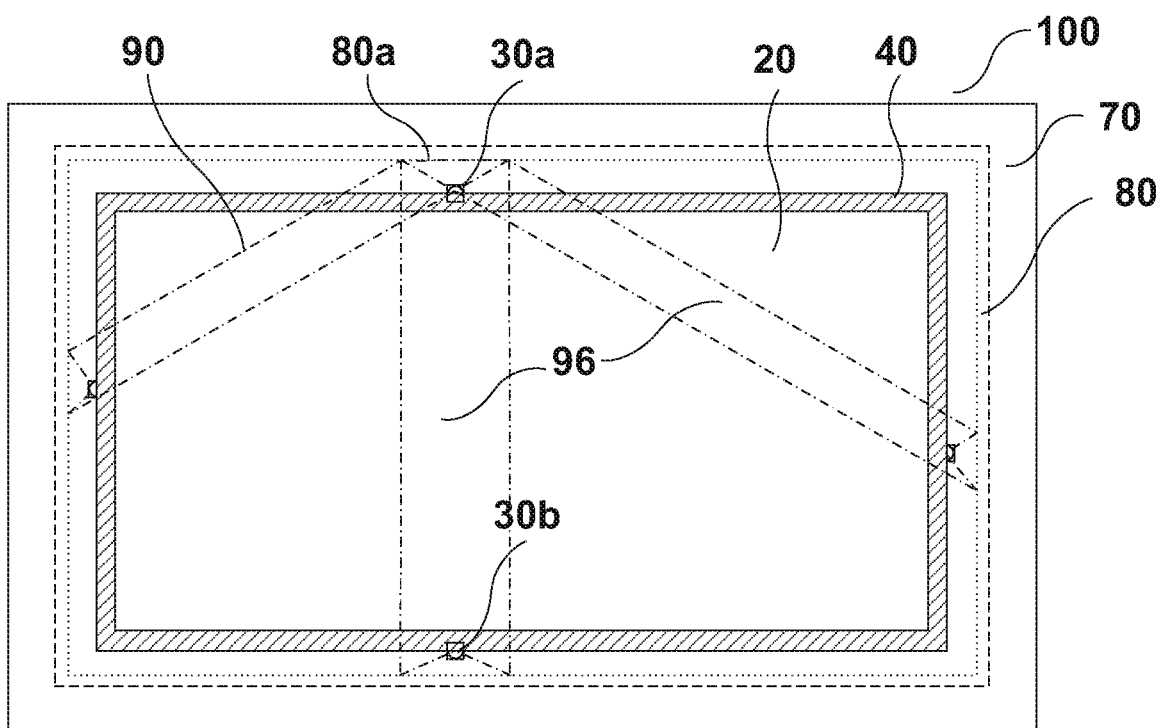


Figure 6

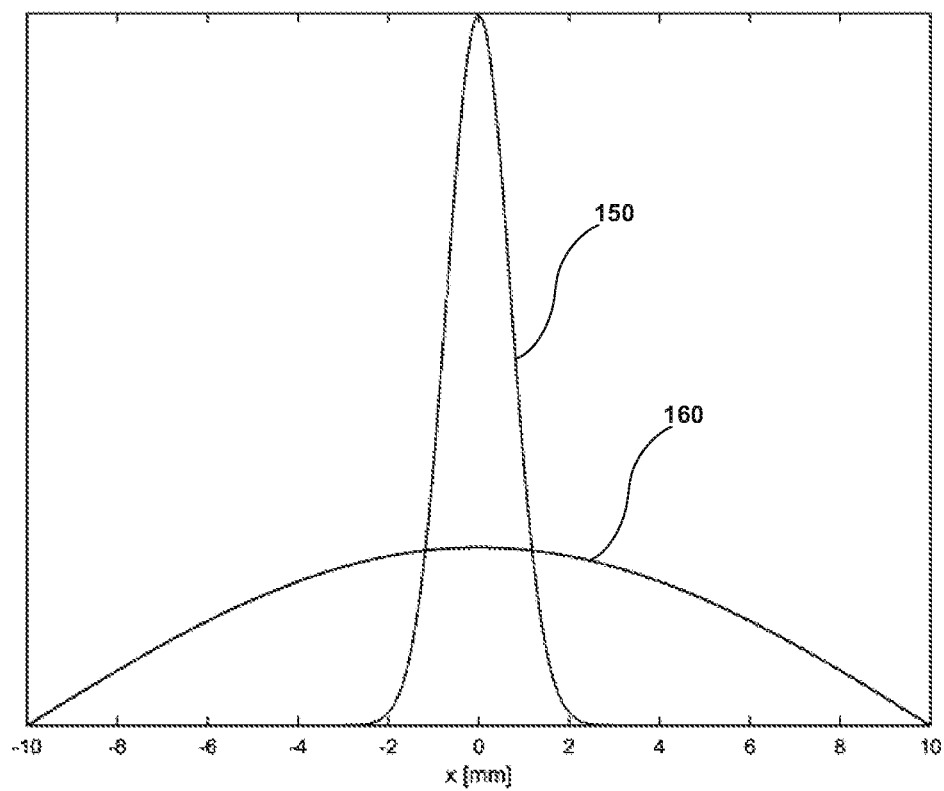


Figure 7

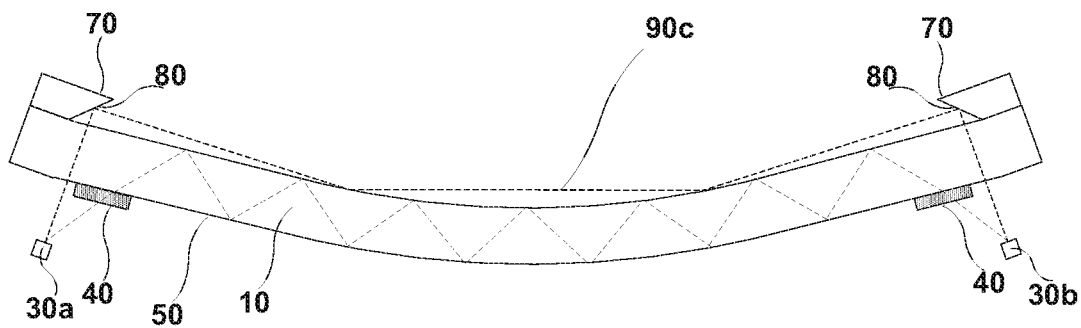


Figure 8

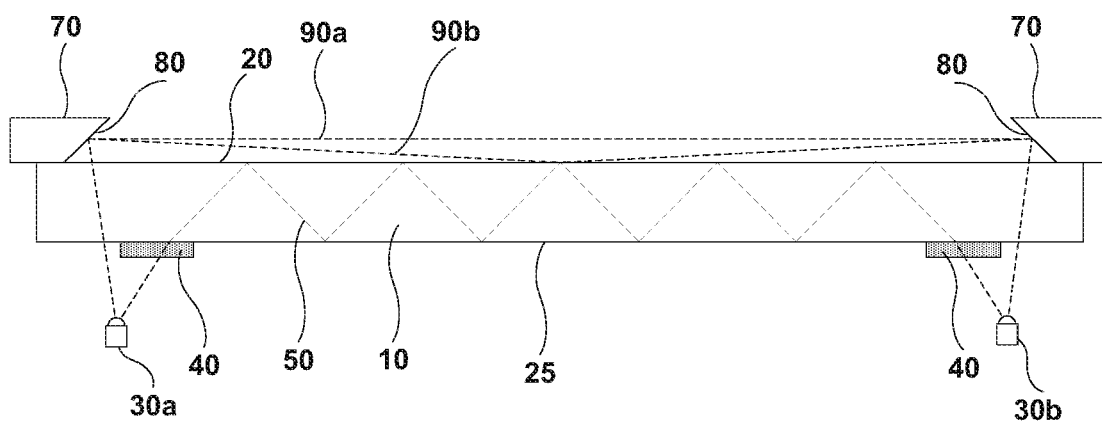


Figure 9

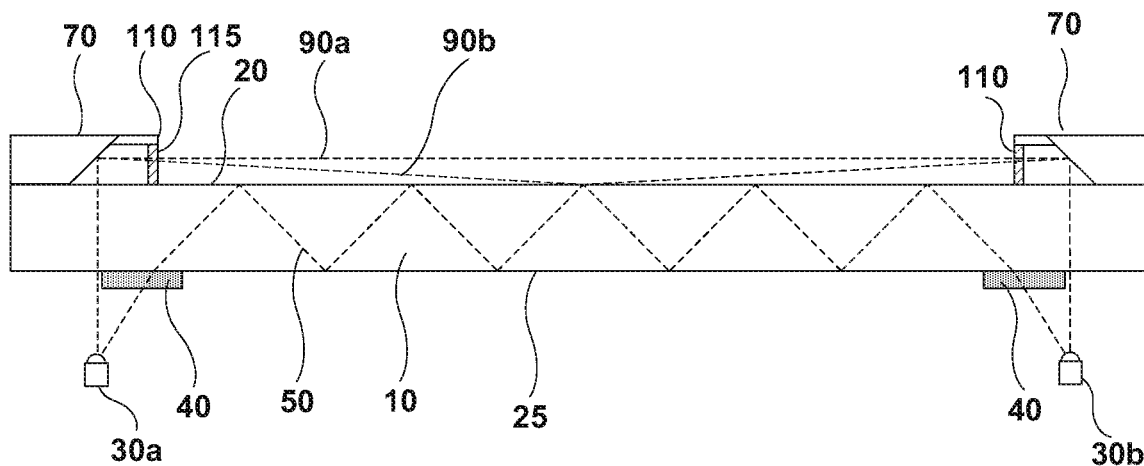


Figure 10

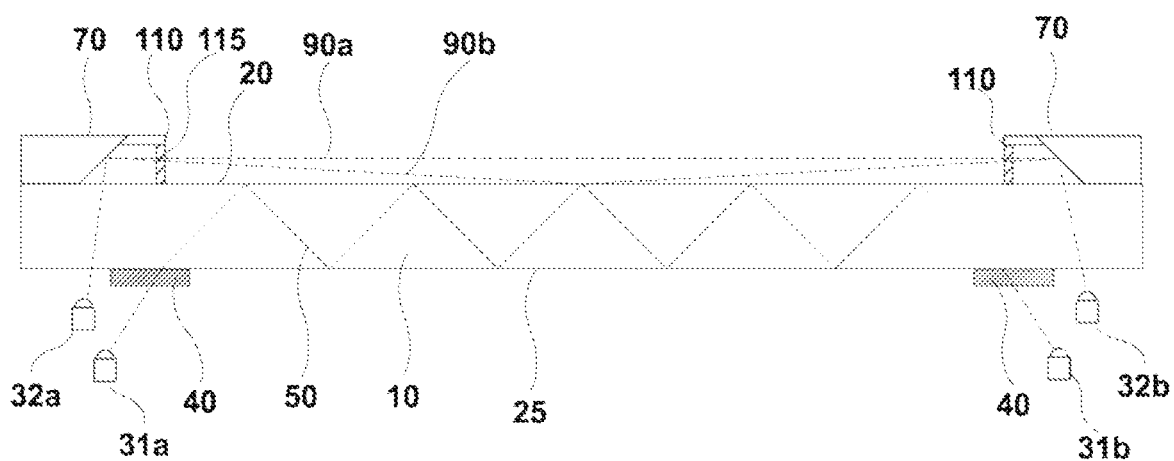


Figure 11

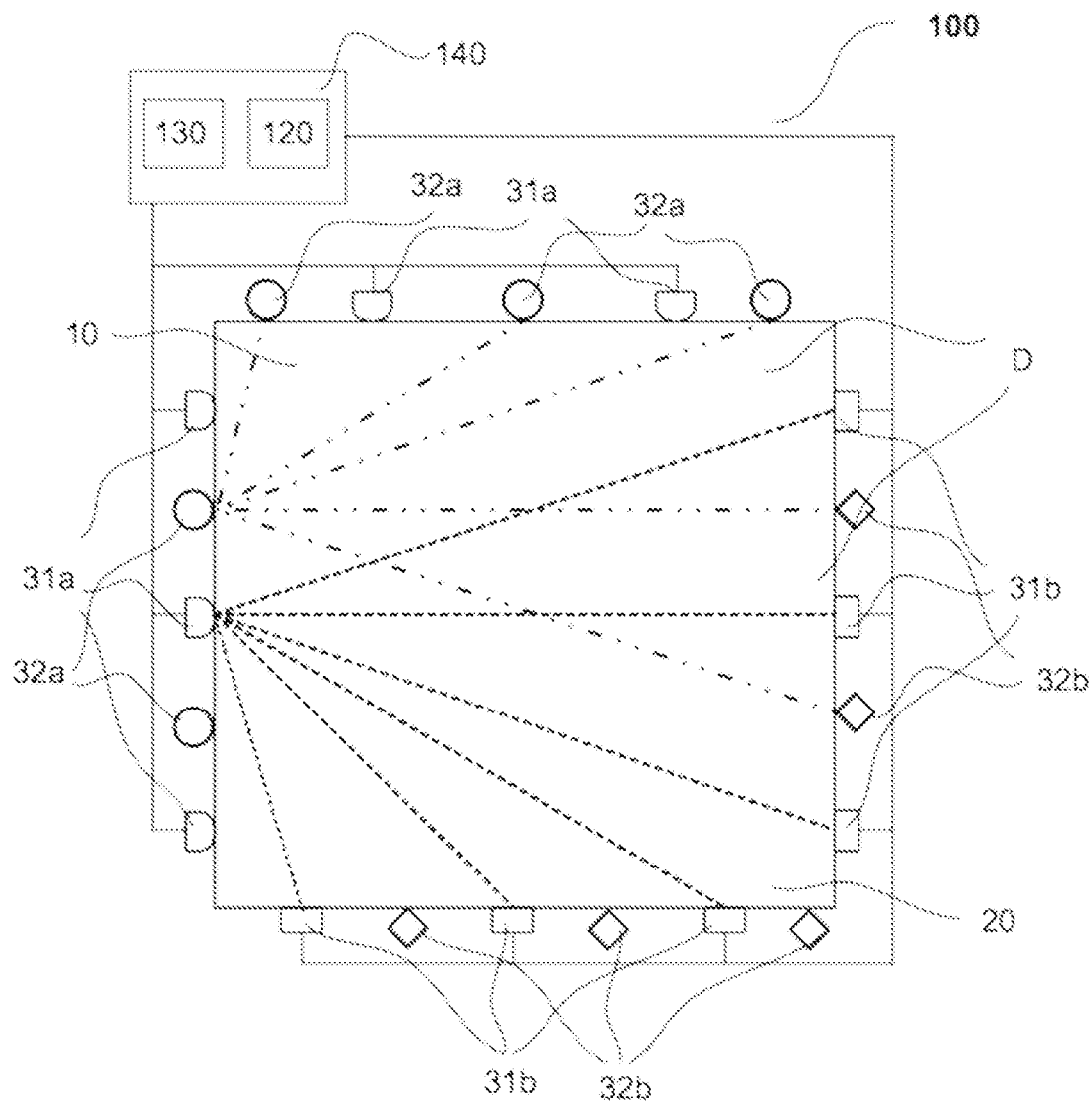


Figure 12

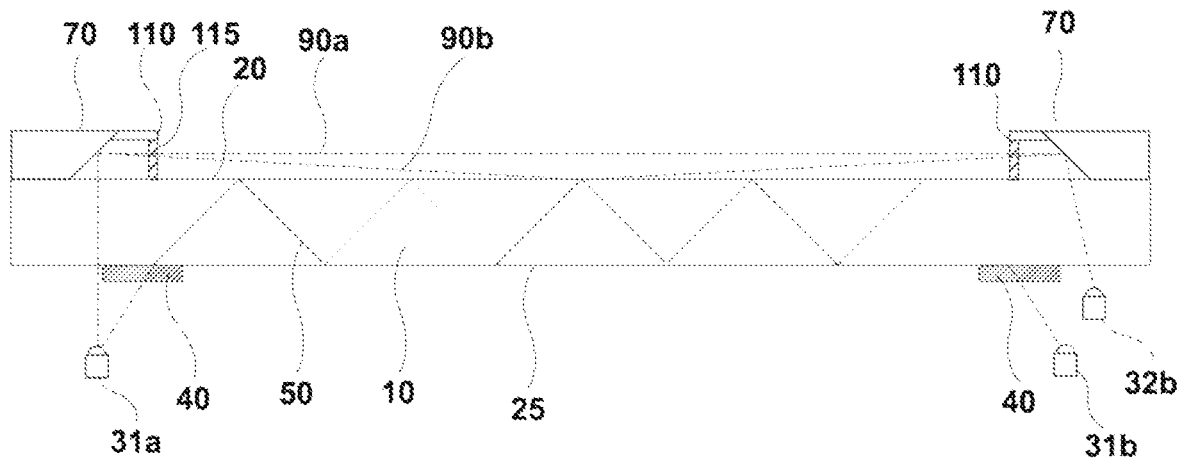


Figure 13

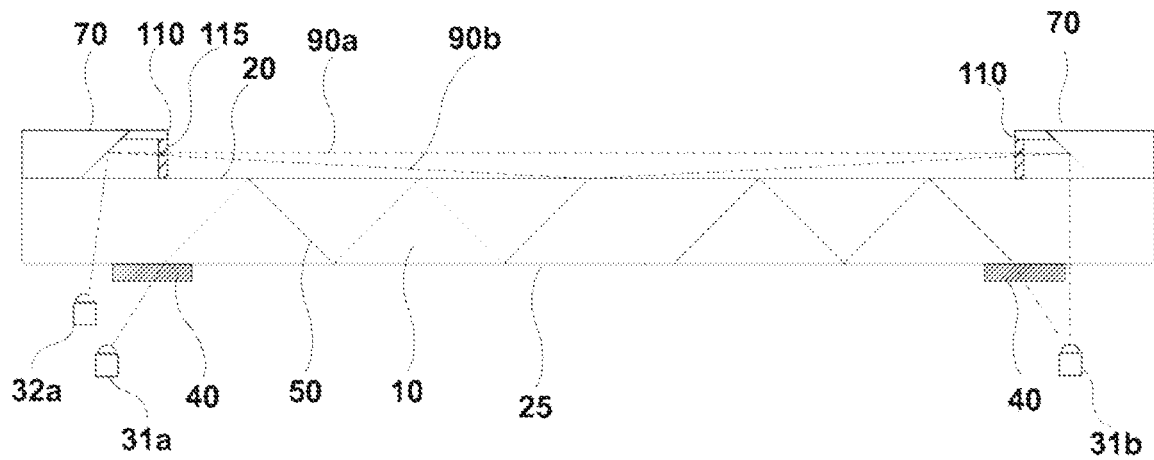


Figure 14

1

OPTICAL TOUCH SYSTEM COMPRISING MEANS FOR PROJECTING AND DETECTING LIGHT BEAMS ABOVE AND INSIDE A TRANSMISSIVE PANEL

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims the benefit and priority to and is a U.S. National Phase of PCT International Application No. PCT/SE2016/050098, filed on Feb. 9, 2016. This application claims the benefit and priority to Swedish Patent Application No. 1550145-5, filed Feb. 9, 2015. The disclosure of the above-referenced applications are hereby expressly incorporated by reference in their entirety.

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention generally relates to improved touch determination on touch surfaces of optical touch-sensing systems, and in particular in relation to FTIR-based (frustrated total internal reflection) touch systems.

BACKGROUND ART

In one category of touch-sensitive panels known as ‘above surface optical touch systems’ and known from e.g. U.S. Pat. No. 4,459,476, a plurality of optical emitters and optical receivers are arranged around the periphery of a touch surface to create a grid of intersecting light paths above the touch surface. Each light path extends between a respective emitter/receiver pair. An object that touches the touch surface will block certain ones of the light paths. Based on the identity of the receivers detecting a blocked light path, a processor can determine the location of the intercept between the blocked light paths. This type of system is only capable of detecting the location of one object (single-touch detection). Further, the required number of emitters and receivers, and thus cost and complexity, increases rapidly with increasing surface area and/or spatial resolution of the touch panel.

In a variant, e.g. shown in WO2006/095320, each optical emitter emits a beam of light that diverges across the touch surface, and each beam is detected by more than one optical receiver positioned around the periphery of the touch surface. Thus, each emitter creates more than one light path across the touch surface. A large number of light paths are created by sequentially activating different emitters around the periphery of the touch surface, and detecting the light received from each emitter by a plurality of optical receivers. Thereby, it is possible to reduce the number of emitters and receivers for a given surface area or spatial resolution, or to enable simultaneous location detection of more than one touching object (multi-touch detection).

If the display screen is contaminated by e.g. fingerprints, the optical transmission path may become unintentionally interrupted and the information retrieved from the system erroneous or incomplete as the contaminated surface becomes insensitive to touches. If contaminants are collected in front of one of the emitters or detectors there will always be blocked or occluded light paths.

Another category of touch-sensitive panels known as ‘in-glass optical systems’ is now described and is also known from e.g. U.S. Pat. No. 8,581,884.

FIG. 1 illustrates an example of a touch-sensitive apparatus **100** that is based on the concept of FTIR (Frustrated Total Internal Reflection), also denoted “FTIR system”. The

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apparatus operates by transmitting light inside a transmissive panel **10**, from light emitters **30a** to light sensors or detectors **30b**, so as to illuminate a touch surface **20** from within the transmissive panel **10**. The transmissive panel **10** is made of solid material in one or more layers and may have any shape. The transmissive panel **10** defines an internal radiation propagation channel, in which light propagates by internal reflections.

In the example of FIG. 1, the propagation channel is defined between the touch surface **20** and bottom surface **25** of the transmissive panel **10**, where the touch surface **20** allows the propagating light to interact with touching object **60** and thereby defines the touch surface **20**. This is achieved by injecting the light into the transmissive panel **10** via coupling element **40** such that the light is reflected by total internal reflection (TIR) in the touch surface **20** as it propagates through the transmissive panel **10**. The light may be reflected by TIR on the bottom surface **25** or against a reflective coating thereon. Upon reaching coupling element **40** on a far side of the panel, the light is coupled out of transmissive panel **10** and onto detectors **30b**. The touch-sensitive apparatus **100** may be designed to be overlaid on or integrated into a display device or monitor.

U.S. Pat. No. 8,553,014 describes an attempt to combine the above surface and in-glass optical systems described above. U.S. Pat. No. 8,553,014 describes an optical coupling technique for introducing light into a transmissive panel and above a transmissive panel simultaneously. However, the in-coupling component shown in FIG. 126 of U.S. Pat. No. 8,553,014 is a complex prism and appears to rely on total internal reflection and diffraction to couple the light above the touch surface. Such an arrangement would be highly tolerance sensitive, making the optical signal highly sensitive to, for example, the load on the touch surface, the tolerances of process used to mount the prism to the transmissive panel, and the manufacturing of both the transmissive panel and the prism. Furthermore, the spread of the light in a plane parallel to the transmissive panel is limited to a range of less than 80 degrees as light outside this range will be diffracted up and away from the panel. Such a system is best suited to a rectangular grid of detection lines, such as described in U.S. Pat. No. 4,459,476 above. Furthermore, a complex prism as described in U.S. Pat. No. 8,553,014 would be both expensive to manufacture and bulky, taking up valuable space underneath and to the side of the transmissive panel.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

It is an objective of the invention to at least partly overcome one or more of the above-identified limitations of the prior art.

One or more of these objectives, as well as further objectives that may appear from the description below, are at least partly achieved by means of a method for data processing, a computer readable medium, devices for data processing, and a touch-sensing apparatus according to the independent claims, embodiments thereof being defined by the dependent claims.

An embodiment of the invention provides a touch sensing apparatus, comprising: a light transmissive element that defines a touch surface; a set of emitters arranged around the periphery of the touch surface to emit beams of light into the light transmissive element, wherein a first portion of the beams of light propagate inside the light transmissive element while illuminating the touch surface such that an object touching the touch surface causes an attenuation of the

propagating light, and wherein a second portion of the beams of light pass out of the light transmissive element and are reflected to travel above the touch surface, a set of light detectors arranged around the periphery of the touch surface to receive light from the set of emitters from the transmissive element and from above the touch surface, wherein each light detector is arranged to receive light from more than one emitter; a processing element configured to determine, based on output signals of the light detectors, a light energy value for each light path; to generate a transmission value for each light path based on the light energy value; and to operate an image reconstruction algorithm on at least part of the thus-generated transmission values so as to determine the position of the object on the touch surface.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

Embodiments of the invention will now be described in more detail with reference to the accompanying schematic drawings.

FIG. 1 shows a cross section of an FTIR-based touch-sensitive apparatus according to the prior art.

FIG. 2 is a top plan view of an FTIR-based touch-sensitive apparatus.

FIG. 3 shows a section view of an extended FTIR touch system according to an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 4 shows a top plan view of an extended FTIR touch system according to an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 5 shows the narrow detection lines within transmissive panel 10.

FIG. 6 shows the broad detection lines above transmissive panel 10.

FIG. 7 shows the signal profile of detection lines 95 and detection lines 96.

FIG. 8 shows an embodiment of the present invention in which the touch surface is curved.

FIG. 9 shows an embodiment of the present invention with deflectors set back from the edge of the active area.

FIG. 10 shows an embodiment of the present invention having a dust shield.

FIG. 11 shows an embodiment of the present invention having a first set of emitters and detectors for projecting light above transmissive panel 10 and a second set of emitters and detectors for projecting light into transmissive panel 10.

FIG. 12 shows a top plan view of the FIG. 11.

FIG. 13 shows a variation of FIG. 11 wherein the emitters are configured to simultaneously project light above and into transmissive panel 10.

FIG. 14 shows a variation of FIG. 11 wherein the detectors are configured to simultaneously receive light from above and from within transmissive panel 10.

DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS

Before describing embodiments of the invention, a few definitions will be given.

A “touch object” or “touching object” is a physical object that touches, or is brought in sufficient proximity to, a touch surface so as to be detected by one or more sensors in the touch system. The physical object may be animate or inanimate.

An “interaction” occurs when the touch object affects a parameter measured by the sensor.

A “touch” denotes a point of interaction as seen in the interaction pattern.

Throughout the following description, the same reference numerals are used to identify corresponding elements.

Main Embodiment

FIG. 2 illustrates a top plan view of FIG. 1 in an example of a touch-sensitive apparatus 100 that is based on the concept of FTIR. Emitters 30a are distributed around the periphery of touch surface 20, to project light into the transmissive panel 10 such that at least part of the light is captured inside the transmissive panel 10 for propagation by internal reflection in the propagation channel. Detectors 30b are distributed around the periphery of touch surface 20, to receive part of the propagating light. The light from each of emitters 30a will thereby propagate inside the transmissive panel 10 to a number of different detectors 30b on a plurality of light paths D.

Even if the light paths D correspond to light that propagates by internal reflections inside the panel 1, the light paths D may conceptually be represented as “detection lines” that extend across the touch surface 20 to the periphery of touch surface 20 between pairs of emitters 30a and detectors 30b, as shown in FIG. 2. Thus, the detection lines D correspond to a projection of the light paths D onto the touch surface 20. Thereby, the emitters 30a and detectors 30b collectively define a grid of detection lines D (“detection grid”) on the touch surface 20, as seen in a top plan view. The spacing of intersections in the detection grid defines the spatial resolution of the touch-sensitive apparatus 100, i.e. the smallest object that can be detected on the touch surface 20. The width of the detection line is a function of the width of the emitters and corresponding detectors. A wide detector detecting light from a wide emitter provides a wide detection line with a broader surface coverage, minimising the space in between detection lines which provide no touch coverage. A disadvantage of broad detection lines may be the reduced touch precision and lower signal to noise ratio.

As used herein, the emitters 30a may be any type of device capable of emitting radiation in a desired wavelength range, for example a diode laser, a VCSEL (vertical-cavity surface-emitting laser), an LED (light-emitting diode), an incandescent lamp, a halogen lamp, etc. The emitters 30a may also be formed by the end of an optical fiber. The emitters 30a may generate light in any wavelength range. The following examples presume that the light is generated in the infrared (IR), i.e. at wavelengths above about 750 nm. Analogously, the detectors 30b may be any device capable of converting light (in the same wavelength range) into an electrical signal, such as a photo-detector, a CCD device, a CMOS device, etc.

The detectors 30b collectively provide an output signal, which is received and sampled by a signal processor 130. The output signal contains a number of sub-signals, also denoted “projection signals”, each representing the energy of light received by one of light detectors 30b from one of light emitters 30a. Depending on implementation, the signal processor 130 may need to process the output signal for separation of the individual projection signals. The projection signals represent the received energy, intensity or power of light received by the detectors 30b on the individual detection lines D. Whenever an object touches a detection line D, the received energy on this detection line is decreased or “attenuated”.

The signal processor 130 may be configured to process the projection signals so as to determine a property of the touching objects, such as a position (e.g. in a x,y coordinate system), a shape, or an area. This determination may involve

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a straight-forward triangulation based on the attenuated detection lines, e.g. as disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 7,432,893 and WO2010/015408, or a more advanced processing to recreate a distribution of attenuation values (for simplicity, referred to as an “attenuation pattern”) across the touch surface **20**, where each attenuation value represents a local degree of light attenuation. The attenuation pattern may be further processed by the signal processor **130** or by a separate device (not shown) for determination of a position, shape or area of touching objects. The attenuation pattern may be generated e.g. by any available algorithm for image reconstruction based on projection signal values, including tomographic reconstruction methods such as Filtered Back Projection, FFT-based algorithms, ART (Algebraic Reconstruction Technique), SART (Simultaneous Algebraic Reconstruction Technique), etc. Alternatively, the attenuation pattern may be generated by adapting one or more basis functions and/or by statistical methods such as Bayesian inversion. Examples of such reconstruction functions designed for use in touch determination are found in WO2009/077962, WO2011/049511, WO2011/139213, WO2012/050510, and WO2013/062471, all of which are incorporated herein by reference.

In the illustrated example, the apparatus **100** also includes a controller **120** which is connected to selectively control the activation of the emitters **30a** and, possibly, the readout of data from the detectors **30b**. Depending on implementation, the emitters **30a** and/or detectors **30b** may be activated in sequence or concurrently, e.g. as disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 8,581,884. The signal processor **130** and the controller **120** may be configured as separate units, or they may be incorporated in a single unit. One or both of the signal processor **130** and the controller **120** may be at least partially implemented by software executed by a processing unit **140**.

FIG. 3 illustrates an embodiment of the invention extending the FTIR system of FIG. 1 to include touch detection lines above touch surface **20**.

As with FIG. 1, FIG. 3 shows an embodiment of the invention in which light travels inside a transmissive panel **10**, from light emitters **30a** to detectors **30b**, so as to illuminate a touch surface **20** from within the transmissive panel **10**. The transmissive panel **10** is made of solid material in one or more layers and may have any shape. The transmissive panel **10** defines an internal radiation propagation channel, in which light beam **50** propagates by internal reflections. In FIG. 3, the propagation channel is defined between the touch surface **20** and bottom surface **25** of the transmissive panel **10**, where the touch surface **20** allows the propagating light beam **50** to interact with touching object **60** and thereby defines the touch surface **20**. This is achieved by injecting the light into the transmissive panel **10** via coupling element **40** such that the light is reflected by total internal reflection (TIR) in the touch surface **20** as it propagates through the transmissive panel **10**. The light beam **50** may be reflected by TIR on the bottom surface **25** or against a reflective coating thereon. Upon reaching coupling element **40** on a far side of the panel, the light is coupled out of transmissive panel **10** and onto detectors **30b**. The touch-sensitive apparatus **100** may be designed to be overlaid on or integrated into a display device or monitor.

FIG. 3 further illustrates that a portion of the light emitted by emitters **30a** is transmitted through transmissive panel **10** in a manner that does not cause the light to TIR within transmissive panel **10**. Instead, the light the light exits transmissive panel **10** through touch surface **20** and is reflected by reflector surface **80** of edge reflector **70** to travel along path **90a** in a plane parallel with touch surface **20**. The

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light will then continue until deflected by reflector surface **80** of the edge reflector **70** at an opposing edge of the transmissive panel **10**, wherein the light will be deflected back down through transmissive panel **10** and onto detectors **30b**. The feature of the transmitting the light from the emitters **30a** to reflector surface **80** via transmissive panel **10** has a number of advantages over the solutions presented by the prior art. In particular, manufacture of touch-sensitive apparatus **100** becomes significantly less expensive. This feature allows an arrangement where nothing is in contact with the edges of the transmissive panel **10**, allowing expensive finishing (where the transmissive panel **10** is formed from glass) to regulate the edges of the glass to be avoided. Furthermore, fastening of the components to the transmissive panel **10** is simplified and optical tolerances are improved.

FIG. 4 shows a top plan view of the embodiment of FIG. 3. As viewed from above, light beam **50** travelling through transmissive panel **10** originates from where the light is coupled into the transmissive panel **10** by coupling element **40** at in-coupling point **45**. Light beam **90** travelling above touch surface **20** (along path **90a**, path **90b**) originates from reflector surface focal point **80a** of reflector surface **80** where the light emitted from emitters **30a** and having passed through transmissive panel **10** is reflected across touch surface **20**. The distance travelled by the (un-collimated) light from emitters **30a** to reflector surface focal point **80a** is greater than the distance travelled by the light from emitters **30a** to in-coupling point **45**. Consequently, the spread of light reflected from the reflector surface focal point **80a** is broader than the spread of light entering the transmissive panel **10** at in-coupling point **45**. The resulting effect is equivalent to that of using a wider emitter for emitting the above surface light beam **90** than that of light beam **50**, travelling inside the glass. A corresponding effect occurs at the detector end, wherein the light arriving at detectors **30b** via the above surface route is reflected onto detectors **30b** from a broader area than the area of in-coupling point **45**, providing the equivalent effect of broader detectors **30b**.

The result is that detection lines derived from light beam **90** are broader than detection lines derived from light beam **50**. FIG. 5 and FIG. 6 show the difference in detection lines **95** derived from the light travelling within the glass and detection lines **96** derived from light travelling above the touch surface. In FIG. 5, detection lines **95** have a width corresponding to the short distance travelled to the in-coupling point **45** from emitters **30a**. In FIG. 6, detection lines **96** have a width corresponding to the extra distance travelled to reflector surface focal point **80a** from emitters **30a**.

A stylus and a finger may have very large differences in size (or width as viewed from the perspective of a detection line). A stylus may typically provide a width of 2 mm to 5 mm, whereas a finger may provide a width of 5 mm to 15 mm. However, the size of a decoded touch will depend on the convolution of the detection line and the object. It is preferable to have wider detection lines above the glass, both in order to provide better cover the touch surface **20** and to get a broadened stylus interaction since this may increase the resolution. However, broadening of detection lines will reduce the ability to separate two closely spaced touch objects, potentially a key requirement for multi-touch systems.

Therefore, a solution with different detection line widths above and within the glass is required. FIG. 7 shows a signal profile of a narrow detection line overlaid on a wide detection line. Narrow detection lines **95** have a signal profile

corresponding to signal profile **150** and wide detection lines **96** have a signal profile corresponding to signal profile **160**.

Since a stylus will usually be used as a single touch object, broader detection lines are possible. Wide detection lines **96** with a width larger than 4 mm and possibly up to 20 mm are advantageous, although 4 mm-6 mm is preferred.

For narrow detection lines **95** designed to resolved multiple touching objects such as fingers, broadening must be kept down to a size less than or comparable to the touching objects. The width of narrow detection lines **95** is also usually limited by the width of emitters **30a** and detectors **30b**. Narrow detection lines **95** should be less than 5 mm in width. In a preferred embodiment, detection lines **95** are between 2 mm and 3 mm wide.

In one embodiment, reflector surface **80** is a diffusive reflecting surface. In a preferred embodiment, reflector surface **80** is a lambertian diffusive reflecting surface preferably providing a scattering of greater than 90%. Suitable materials for reflector surface **80** may include Titanium oxide paint or Microcellular foamed reflector MCPET. The advantage of using a diffusive reflecting surface is that it makes the optical system less sensitive to production, mounting and load tolerances than a specular reflector or lens. This allows the touch-sensitive apparatus **100** to be cheaper and simpler to produce. Furthermore, a diffusive reflector surface **80** also allows broader and overlapping detection lines.

The amount of light reflected by reflector surface **80** may be controlled by adjusting the size of reflector surface **80**. A reflector surface **80** having a smaller surface area will reflect a small amount of light. Alternatively, paint or spray coatings may be selected to reduce the reflection, and may be applied in a specific pattern to the surface for accurate control of reflectivity.

In one embodiment, the amount of light received at each of detectors **30b** via the in-glass route (shown in the figures as light beam **50**) is greater than or equal to the amount of light received at each of detectors **30b** via the above surface route (shown in the figures as light beam **90**). In a preferred embodiment, the ratio of light received at each of detectors **30b** via the in-glass route is ten times greater than the amount of light received at each of detectors **30b** via the above surface route. This feature is advantageous as it allows the attenuation of the optical signal resulting from FTIR to be easily compared at the reconstruction phase to the attenuation of the optical signal resulting from occlusion of the above surface light, even though the latter is usually significantly larger than the former.

In the embodiment shown in FIG. 3, reflector surface **80** is configured to reflect a portion of light beam **90** to travel along path **90a** and a portion of light beam **90** to travel along path **90b**, by reflecting off touch surface **20** and coupling out to the detector. This advantageously results in a larger portion of light beam **90** being detected by detectors **30b**. Furthermore, the use of path **90b** allows load tolerances of the touch-sensitive apparatus **100** to be improved. A heavy load on touch surface **20** may deform the panel and bring path **90a** out of alignment. However, path **90b** would likely be less affected by said deformation, allowing sufficient signal to continue to be received by detectors **30b**.

In an embodiment of the invention shown in FIG. 8, transmissive panel **10** is curved to form a concave surface. In this embodiment, reflector surface **80** is configured to cause a portion of light beam **90** to reflect a plurality of times off touch surface **20** to follow a path **90c** shown in FIG. 8.

Similarly to the above embodiment, this feature allows a further enhancement of the signal to noise ratio, even for a curved panel.

In an embodiment of the invention shown in FIG. 9, edge reflector **70** is set further back from the periphery of touch surface **20** than in the previous embodiments. The positioning of the edge reflector **70** further back from the periphery of touch surface **20** provides a longer distance from emitters **30a** to reflector surface **80**, allowing the above surface detection lines to be broader. Furthermore, the extra distance that the edge reflector **70** is set back provides larger overlap between wide detection lines **96** in the peripheral regions of touch surface **20** resulting in improved accuracy in areas. This is especially advantageous where narrow detection lines **95** provide limited coverage. In a preferred embodiment, the edge reflector **70** is positioned so that reflector surface **80** is set 10 mm back from in-coupling point **45**.

FIG. 10 shows an embodiment of the invention featuring dust shield **110**. A known problem with above-surface touch systems is the accumulation of dust and contamination around the sensor area or the area in which the light signal is emitted to travel across the touch panel. Dust or other contamination accumulating at this point will block the light signal and seriously degrade the ability of the touch system to determine a touch. For a system such as the embodiment presented in FIG. 3, the accumulation of contamination may be increased where reflector surface **80** is angled to form an overhang. This overhang forms a natural shelter for accumulating contamination, resulting in further touch signal degradation. A solution presented in FIG. 10 is that of a dust shield **110** forming a physical barrier preventing the dust from reaching reflector surface **80** and comprising transparent window **115** through which the light signal may pass unhindered. Preferably, dust shield **110** forms a sloping edge, sloping from the inside edge in contact with touch surface **20** outwardly to the top surface of edge reflector **70**. This allows dust shield **110** to be effectively wiped clean.

In a preferred embodiment, transparent window **115** comprises a material of coating configured to allow only IR or Near-IR light to pass through. This feature provides improved ambient light noise reduction as light from artificial lighting or sun light is filtered before reaching detectors **30b**.

In a preferred embodiment, dust shield **110** is configured with a longer dimension extending from edge reflector **70** towards touch surface **20** and with an internal top surface providing a light baffle effect so as to provide an angular filter for light entering through transparent window **115**. This is advantageous for reducing ambient noise as light entering at the wrong angle is absorbed into the roof of the dust shield **110**. Furthermore, when combined with the embodiment from FIG. 8, the angle of light paths travelling above the panel may be limited so that that detection lines very high above the glass **90a** may be suppressed.

FIG. 11 shows an alternative embodiment to the embodiment shown in FIG. 3. In FIG. 11, apparatus **100** is configured to transmit light from a first set of emitters **31a** to a first set of detectors **31b** inside a transmissive panel **10** so as to illuminate a touch surface **20** from within the transmissive panel **10**. Apparatus **100** is also configured to transmit light from a second set of emitters **32a** to a second set of detectors **32b** such that the light is emitted by emitters **32a**, exits transmissive panel **10** through touch surface **20** and is reflected by reflector surface **80** of edge reflector **70** to travel along path **90a** in a plane parallel with touch surface **20**. The light will then continue until deflected by reflector surface **80** of the edge reflector **70** at an opposing edge of the

transmissive panel 10, wherein the light will be deflected back down through transmissive panel 10 and onto detectors 32b. Significant advantages may be obtained from using two separate emitting and detecting systems rather than a single set of emitters and detectors for both the above-surface and FTIR light paths. A significant problem with trying to differentiate between the attenuation of the light travelling along a path above the touch surface from the attenuation of light travelling along a path within the panel via FTIR is that a typical finger touch is likely to produce an attenuation of the light above the panel is greater than the attenuation of the light travelling within the panel via FTIR by as much as a factor of 50. This results in an attenuation signal of the light travelling in the panel which is difficult to differentiate from noise relative to the attenuation signal of the light travelling above the panel. For objects such as stylus tips, this relative difference in signal strength can be even greater. Therefore, the use of separate emitting and detecting systems for light paths above (above-surface system) and within the panel via FTIR (FTIR system) allows each system to be configured appropriately for the respective signal-to-noise ratios. The separate resulting signals can then be combined to provide a system that provides the following features:

Oil or water contamination on the touch surface may appear to the FTIR system as an attenuation surface area and generate a false touch. However, in the above embodiment, the touch output of the FTIR system may be compared to the touch output of the above-surface system to identify touches of the FTIR system which do not appear in the touch output of the above-surface system. This would indicate that the identified touches do not correspond to actual objects above the touch surface but mere contamination on the surface. The output of the identified touches can then be suppressed.

Similarly to the above, when a user raises their finger from the touch surface, a previously identified touch should be removed from the touch output. However, on occasion, finger grease from the skin is left on the touch surface and an FTIR system continues to detect and report a touch. In the above embodiment, the output of the above-surface system may be used to identify touches of the FTIR system where the touching object has now been removed. The output of the identified touches can then be suppressed.

Certain object types produce very little attenuation of the FTIR light when in contact with the touch surface e.g. Hard objects such as stylus tips. Where the above-surface system registers an object but the FTIR system does not, it can be determined that the object is likely to be a 'hard object' as opposed to a normal touch from a finger. Differentiation between hard and soft surfaced objects may allow differentiation between e.g. a pen and a finger. A touch system configured to differentiate between a stylus and a finger tip may generate a different UI output in dependence on the identified object touching the touch surface.

One problem with above-surface systems is that the object touching the touch surface may completely occlude one or more light paths of the above-surface system. Where a large number of touches are simultaneously applied to the touch surface, portions of the touch surface may become significantly shielded from the light paths of the above-surface system, resulting in little or no touch signal in the shielded portion. In the above embodiment, the FTIR may continue to provide a touch signal within the occluded areas, as the attenuation of the FTIR light paths resulting from a touch is relatively small and non-occluding.

In the embodiment of FIG. 11, a first wavelength of light emitted by first set of emitters 31a and detected by first set of detectors 31b may be different to a second wavelength of

light emitted by second set of emitters 32a and detected by second set of detectors 32b. This allows light to be emitted from one of the first set of emitters 31a and one of the second set of emitters 32a simultaneously and detected by the first set of detectors 31b and second set of detectors 32b without co-interference. This may also allow improved ambient light noise reduction in environments where ambient light comprises more light with a first wavelength than light with a second wavelength or vice versa. E.g. Wherein the first and second wavelengths are both near IR wavelengths.

In the embodiment of FIG. 11, the timing sequence used to activate emitters of the first and second set of emitters may be chosen to ensure that activation of the emitters of the first set of emitters does not chronologically overlap with activation of emitters of the second set of emitters. This allows potential co-interference to be minimized.

FIG. 12 shows a top plan view of the FIG. 11. In this embodiment, emitters 31a are spatially interlaced with emitters 32a around the peripheral edge of transmissive panel 10 so that emitters of first set 31a are positioned between adjacent emitters of second set 32a. Similarly, detectors 31b are spatially interlaced with detectors 32b around the peripheral edge of transmissive panel 10 so that detectors of first set 31b are positioned between adjacent emitters of second set 32b. This has the advantage of improving coverage of the touch surface where detection paths of the above-surface system cover gaps between detection paths of the FTIR system and vice versa.

In one embodiment, emitters 31a and detectors 31b are only positioned along sub-portions of the periphery of the touch surface. In this embodiment, the portion of the periphery of the touch surface along which emitters 31a and detectors 31b are positioned is smaller than the portion of the periphery of the touch surface along which emitters 31a and detectors 31b are positioned. In one example, emitters 31a and detectors 31b are only located along two opposing edges of a rectangular touch surface. In an alternative embodiment, emitters 31a are placed along one edge of the rectangular touch surface and detectors 31b are positioned along an opposing edge of the touch surface. Alternatively, emitters 31a and detectors 31b may be positioned along L-shaped portions of the periphery of the rectangular touch surface at the corners. In one embodiment, the number of emitters 31a and detectors 31b are fewer than the number of emitters 32a and detectors 32b respectively. This may result in an FTIR system with a lower resolution than the above-surface system. Alternatively, for all of the above arrangements, emitters 31a and detectors 31b may be swapped for emitters 32a and detectors 32b so that the FTIR system has a higher resolution and/or coverage than the above-surface system. These arrangements allow the advantages of a complete above-surface system or FTIR system to be supplemented with the advantages of a limited FTIR system or limited above-surface system respectively without the need for a complete version of both systems. This would allow a significant reduction in manufacturing cost, power usage, and even physical size of the touch frame. E.g. Where high accuracy pressure detection needed to be added to an above-surface system, a limited FTIR type system configured to detect pressure (as is known in the art) may be added to the above-surface system with only as many emitters and detectors needed to accurately detect pressure. In one example, the limited system comprises only 25% of the number of emitters and detectors of the complete system.

In one embodiment, a low-power mode is provided wherein only the above-surface system is powered. When a touch is detected by the above-surface system, a full-power

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mode is activated and power is provided to the FTIR system. This has the advantage of preserving energy during periods that the above-surface system detects no touches whilst enabling the features of the FTIR system once it is required. Alternatively, an embodiment is provided wherein only the FTIR system is powered in a low-power mode and the above-surface system is only powered on when required. This may include a system wherein the above-surface system is only activated periodically or in response to a determination that a touch detected by the FTIR system is possibly a false touch caused by contamination.

FIG. 13 shows a variation of FIG. 11 wherein emitters 31a are configured to simultaneously project light above and into transmissive panel 10 but wherein separate detectors 31b and 32b are used to provide separate above-surface and FTIR type touch signals. This advantageously allows simultaneous emission of both signals using a single emitter, allowing low energy consumption and cheaper manufacturing costs, whilst the above features.

FIG. 14 shows an alternative to FIG. 13 wherein the detectors 31b are configured to simultaneously receive light from above and from within transmissive panel 10 but wherein separate emitters 31a and 32a are used to provide separate above-surface and FTIR type touch signals. This configuration advantageously allows separate control of the light intensity of the light emitted from emitters 31a and 32a to account for environmental light noise or other situations in which light levels need to be separately altered, whilst also allowing low energy consumption and cheaper manufacturing costs.

For all of the above embodiments, alternative in-coupling and out-coupling solutions used for coupling the light into and out of transmissive panel 10 may be employed according to techniques known in the prior art. E.g. Coupling the light into the edge of the panel rather than from below.

Furthermore, alternative waveguide, lens, and reflective surface configurations to convey light from emitters 32a to a plane parallel with touch surface 20 and back to detectors 32b may be employed according to techniques known in the prior art. E.g. Configurations for conveying the light around the edge of the panel rather than through it.

REFERENCE SIGNS LIST

A. touch-sensitive apparatus 100
 B. transmissive panel 10
 C. touch surface 20
 D. bottom surface 25
 E. emitters 30a
 F. detectors 30b
 G. coupling element 40
 H. in-coupling point 45
 I. light beam 50
 J. touching object 60
 K. edge reflector 70
 L. reflector surface 80
 M. reflector surface focal point 80a
 N. light beam 90
 O. path 90a
 P. path 90b
 Q. path 90c
 R. detection lines 95
 S. detection lines 96
 T. dust shield 110
 U. transparent window 115
 V. light paths D
 W. controller 120

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X. signal processor 130
 Y. processing unit 140
 Z. signal profile 150
 AA. signal profile 160

The invention claimed is:

1. A touch sensing apparatus, comprising:

a light transmissive element that defines a touch surface;
 a first set of emitters arranged around a first portion of a periphery of the touch surface, the first set of emitters configured to emit first beams of light into the light transmissive element, wherein the first beams of light propagate inside the light transmissive element while illuminating the touch surface;

a second set of emitters arranged around a second portion of the periphery of the touch surface, the second set of emitters configured to emit second beams of light, wherein the second beams of light are reflected to travel above the touch surface;

a first set of light detectors arranged around a third portion of the periphery of the touch surface, the first set of light detectors configured to receive light from the first set of emitters from the transmissive element;

a second set of light detectors arranged around a fourth portion of the periphery of the touch surface, the second set of light detectors configured to receive light from the second set of emitters from above the touch surface, and

a diffusive reflecting surface arranged around the first and the second portions of the periphery of the touch surface to direct light from the first and the second set of emitters across the touch surface, wherein the diffusive reflecting surface provides a scattering of greater than 90% and wherein the diffusive reflecting surface is arranged a greater distance from the periphery of the touch surface in the plane of the touch surface than emitters;

wherein each light detector in the first set of light detectors is arranged to receive light from more than one emitter in the first set of emitters;

a processor configured to determine, based on output signals of the first and second set of light detectors, the position of an object on the touch surface.

2. The touch sensing apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first and second set of emitters comprise at least one common emitter.

3. The touch sensing apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first and second set of detectors comprise at least one common detector.

4. The touch sensing system of claim 1 wherein the processor is configured to perform a first touch determination based on signals of the first set of light detectors and a second touch determination based on signals of the second set of light detectors, and wherein the position of an object on the touch surface is determined in dependence on the first touch determination and second touch determination.

5. The touch sensing system of claim 4, wherein the processor is configured to determine that the object is not touching the touch surface when the first touch determination indicates the presence of the object but the second touch determination indicates the absence of the object.

6. The touch sensing system of claim 4, wherein the processor is configured to determine that the object is of a first object type when the first touch determination indicates the absence of the object but the second touch determination indicates the presence of the object.

7. The touch sensing system of claim 4, wherein the processor is configured to determine the position of an

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object on the touch surface in dependence on just the first touch determination when the object is occluded from the second beams of light.

8. The touch sensing system of claim 1 wherein the first set of emitters is configured to emit light at a first wavelength and the first set of detectors is configured to detect light at the first wavelength, and wherein the second set of emitters is configured to emit light at a second wavelength and the second set of detectors is configured to detect light at the second wavelength.

9. The touch sensing system of claim 1 wherein the touch sensing system is configured to activate the first set of emitters and the second set of emitters at non-overlapping times.

10. The touch sensing apparatus of claim 1, wherein the touch sensing system is configured to operate in a low-power mode wherein just the second set of emitters are powered, and wherein when the processor determines the presence of an object on the touch surface from the second set of light detectors, entering a higher-power mode wherein the first and second set of emitters are powered.

11. The touch sensing apparatus of claim 1, wherein the touch sensing system is configured to operate in a low-power mode wherein just the first set of emitters are powered, and wherein when the processor determines the presence of an object on the touch surface from the first set of light detectors, entering a higher-power mode wherein the first set of emitters are powered and the second set of emitters are at least intermittently powered.

12. The touch sensing apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first and/or third portion is larger than the second and/or fourth portion.

13. The touch sensing apparatus of claim 1, wherein the number of the first set of emitters and/or first set of detectors is larger than the number of the second set of emitters and/or second set of detectors.

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14. The touch sensing apparatus of claim 13, wherein the ratio of the first set of emitters and/or first set of detectors to the number of the second set of emitters and/or second set of detectors is 4:1.

15. The touch sensing apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first and second set of emitters are spatially interleaved along the periphery of the touch surface.

16. A touch sensing apparatus, comprising:

a touch surface;

a set of emitters arranged around a portion of the periphery of the touch surface to emit beams of light;

a diffusive reflecting surface arranged around a portion of the periphery of the touch surface to direct light from the set of emitters across the touch surface, wherein the diffusive reflecting surface provides a scattering of greater than 90% and wherein the diffusive reflecting surface is arranged a greater distance from the periphery of the touch surface in the plane of the touch surface than emitters; and

a set of light detectors arranged around a portion of the periphery of the touch surface to receive light from the set of emitters, wherein each light detector is arranged to receive light from more than one emitter.

17. The touch sensing apparatus of claim 16, wherein the diffusive reflecting surface is a Lambertian diffusive reflecting surface.

18. The touch sensing apparatus of claim 16, wherein the diffusive reflecting surface comprises a titanium oxide layer.

19. The touch sensing apparatus of claim 16, wherein the diffusive reflecting surface comprises a microcellular foamed reflector, wherein the touch surface comprises a transparent panel, and wherein the light from the emitters is transmitted to diffusive reflecting surface through a transmissive panel.

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